

*United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
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# ***MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES***

***TITLE: THE MEU(SOC) PREDEPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAM: TRAINING  
THE MEU OR THE MSPF?***

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**AUTHOR: MAJOR M. G. SCHRECKER**

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**Mentor: \_\_Dr. Charles D. Mckenna**

**Approved: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Mentor: \_\_LtCol David G. Reist**

**Approved: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The MEU(SOC) Predeployment Training Program: Training the MEU or the MSPF?

**Author:** Major Mark G. Schrecker

**Thesis:** The MEU is not receiving the maximum benefit from the Predeployment Training Program (PTP), nor will it until the PTP is refocused on conventional skills. An inordinate amount of time is currently spent on training for maritime special operations. While this may be "good training", continued neglect of conventional fundamentals will result in a force that is least prepared to conduct the missions it is most likely to execute.

**Discussion:** The fundamental objective of the MEU(SOC) program as set forth in MCO 3120.9A, is to provide a responsive force to the National Command Authorities and Geographic Combatant Commanders. In order to continue to provide the best possible force, two important and interrelated steps must be taken. Initially, the Marine Corps must study the MEU(SOC) program to determine if the MEU is preparing for the right number and type of missions. Careful study will reveal that the current PTP structure simply does not allow enough time to train to all of the current mission essential task requirements. The second step is, therefore, to limit the capabilities and task requirements of the MEU(SOC) and refocus the PTP on those conventional skills required to conduct MOOTW and supporting operations.

**Conclusion:** The Marine Corps must improve the MEU(SOC) PTP. This program is the centerpiece of the training effort for the premier forward-deployed warfighting force of our nation. The PTP must focus on those missions the MEU(SOC) will most likely be called upon to execute. This improvement is not without cost; the maritime special operations capabilities of the MEU may be diminished. However, given historical precedence and the broad spectrum of alternative forces available to provide a direct action capability, this is a change that must be implemented to ensure the continued success of the MEU(SOC) program.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

4 August 2001

*The heat is oppressive, the humidity nearly 100%, as the nose of the CH-46E pitches upward, bleeding off airspeed. As the nose comes down, the helicopter stabilizes in a hover over the MV Valiant on the James River in northeastern Virginia. A ninety-foot rope is thrown off the ramp and within seconds the twelve man "stick" of Marines, members of the Maritime Special Purpose Force, are fastroping onto the deck. With the last man on deck, the CH-46E noses over, departs and almost instantly another Ch-46 has replaced it, hovering over the deck to disgorge its passengers. This scene is repeated two more times and after 20 minutes the call goes out over the radio, "Touchdown", the vessel has been secured. With the first phase of the Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) successfully completed, the search for contraband cargo begins...*

12 January 2002

*0140 local time. The last aircraft of a four-helicopter division is returning to the USS Nassau after successfully inserting a reinforced platoon from the*

Battalion Landing Team (BLT) into the besieged American Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia. The Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) sortied out of Rota, Spain, six days ago after receiving a Warning Order to be prepared to conduct a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) at the request of the ambassador. After six days of deliberate planning enroute, the ARG arrived off the coast at dusk. The Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Commander elects to make the insert at night, allowing the riots that have been ongoing outside the Embassy all day to subside.

"Wombat 04 is abeam, left seat." "Roger that Wombat," replies the Air Boss, "You're charlie, spot 5." With the moon below the horizon and a solid overcast, the tower can barely make out the silhouette of the aircraft until it is on short final. The calls ring out almost simultaneously from the Boss and the "Tower Flower." "POWER!" "WAVE-OFF" The pilots don't recognize their low approach and excessive closure until it is too late. The nose gear impacts the flight deck as the aircraft slides over the deck. The "yellow shirts" scatter as the pilot struggles to gain control. Fortunately, the damage to the aircraft is minimal. The pilot regains control and lands the aircraft with a stack of mattresses under the nose to take the place

*of the detached nose strut. The shutdown is uneventful and...*

The first scenario is repeated during a one week training period approximately three times each year as the II Marine Expeditionary Force's MEU(SOC)s conduct VBSS training under the watchful eye of the Special Operations Training Group (SOTG). The second scenario, a NEO, has been repeated nine times since 1985, making it the second most called upon capability of the MEU after "Show of Force" operations. Is the mishap that occurs in the second scenario somehow related to the first scenario? Would the pilot have made that landing if he had spent more time focusing on basic aviation skills such as Deck Landing Qualification (DLQ) instead of special operations training that he might never be called upon to use?

The MEU(SOC) Predeployment Training Program (PTP) continues to focus on specialized training (especially for the MSPF) although it becomes more and more apparent with each passing deployment that the conventional capabilities of the MEU(SOC), particularly those tasks that fall into the category of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), are the most relevant to the Geographic Commanders in Chief (CinC)s. This paper will explore the relationship between the capabilities the MEU(SOC) advertises and employs and

those that the PTP focuses on in training. A brief history of the MEU(SOC) program will be presented since the original intent of the program provides useful insight when discussing current trends in training. The current MEU(SOC) capabilities and organization will then be discussed in order to provide some background for an analysis of the PTP.

The Aviation Combat Element (ACE) will be used as a vehicle to analyze the impact and relevance of the current PTP from a Major Subordinate Element (MSE) point of view. While the ACE was chosen to present the MSE viewpoint due to its unique external training requirements and its role in supporting other MEU and SOTG training, the deficiencies noted in conventional skills training apply equally to all of the MSEs. In order to provide some specific examples, the MEU(SOC) work-up of HMM-162, the ACE for the 22<sup>nd</sup> MEU(SOC) that is currently deployed, was studied in detail. As the primary trainer and evaluator of the MEU(SOC) for the MEF, SOTG organization and involvement in the PTP is also reviewed. The MEU(SOC) Review process is analyzed with particular emphasis on the most recent review. Finally, suggestions concerning the MEU(SOC) capabilities review and concepts for restructuring the PTP and SOTG are presented.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Background: A Brief History of the MEU(SOC) Program**

Section 5063, Title 10 of the U.S. Code directs the Commandant of the Marine Corps to train, organize and equip Marine Forces of combined arms for service with the fleet. In response to this directive, Marine Corps Order 3120.8A establishes the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) as the United States Marine Corps force that complies with this mandate.<sup>1</sup> The MAGTF exists in three sizes. The largest is the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), followed by the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) and finally the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). While this paper will focus on the MEU, the recent trend toward reaffirmation of the existence and capabilities of the MEB and larger forces has already begun to have an effect on the training and organization of the MEU.

On 3 October 1983, the Deputy Secretary of Defense published a memorandum on special operations forces. In this memorandum, the secretary noted that:

U.S. national security requires the maintenance of Special Operations Forces (SOFs) capable of conducting the full range of special operations on a worldwide basis, and the revitalization of those forces must be

pursued as a matter of national urgency. Therefore, I am directing that the following steps be taken:

1. Necessary force structure expansion and enhancements in command and control, personnel policy, training, and equipment will be implemented as rapidly as possible and fully implemented not later than the end of Fiscal Year 1990...<sup>2</sup>

Given this direction, General P.X. Kelley, then Commandant of the Marine Corps, ordered an extensive examination to determine what special operations missions could be conducted by the MAGTF. This examination was assigned to the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic.

The Commanding General's report to the Commandant concluded that "MAGTFs, operating as elements of our numbered fleets, are uniquely qualified to conduct a broad spectrum of special operations in a maritime environment, particularly when a requirement exists for the introduction of helicopterborne or surfaceborne forces from the sea."<sup>3</sup> The report dismissed the idea of establishing new organizations as the Marine Corps did in World War II (e.g. raider, glider and parachute battalions) as they would be redundant with other Service's special operations organizations. Additionally, the report cited manpower considerations and most importantly, a fear that creation of special units would shift the Marine Corps away from the primary focus of amphibious missions.

As a result of the conclusions and recommendations of the FMFLant study, General Kelley directed that a pilot special operations program be initiated to enhance special operations capabilities within the existing framework of the MAGTF concept. The initial program was conducted with the forward-deployed Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) as the primary focus. General Kelley was quick to point out that the intent of the program was not to duplicate the capabilities of any existing SOF organizations, but rather to provide a complementary capability based on the introduction of forces from the sea.<sup>4</sup>

The 26<sup>th</sup> MAU underwent the newly devised Special Operations Capable (SOC) training program and, after four months of intensive training, was designated a MAU(SOC) in December of 1985. Following a successful deployment of the 26<sup>th</sup> MAU(SOC), two more MAUs rotated through the training cycle (now six months long), forming a three MAU cycle on the East Coast similar to the one in place today. Noting the success enjoyed by FMFLant, the Commandant directed that the MAU(SOC) program be implemented by FMFPac in January 1987. Using the lessons learned by FMFLant, FMFPac implemented a three month training program and deployed a MAU(SOC) to WestPac on 18 June 1987. In February 1988, the

MAUs were redesignated as MEUs to more accurately reflect the expeditionary nature of this MAGTF.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the specialized training courses provided the MAU, the FMF commanders augmented the traditional MAU with selected detachments from internal assets that expanded the MAU's capabilities. These detachments were not Special Operations type forces; they were simply detachments from within the MAGTF that were not normally assigned to a MAU level unit. These units were primarily assigned to the MAU to increase intelligence gathering, fire support and fire support capability.<sup>6</sup> These detachments (with the exception of ANGLICO) still exist in today's MEU structure. These detachments continue to enhance the Maritime Special Operations capabilities of the MEU, but, more importantly, they enhance the inherent conventional capabilities of the MEU(SOC).

Though the purpose of this paper is not to provide an exhaustive study of the birth of the MEU(SOC) program, an examination as to the original intent and purpose of the program is useful in studying the current direction of the program. General Kelley saw the inherent special operations capabilities in a force that is amphibious in nature. He sought to exploit the capabilities of a force positioned aboard amphibious ships in proximity to a



target, unencumbered by base and overflight restrictions, and already operating under an established command and control system. Today's MEU(SOC) Predeployment Training Program (PTP) tends to focus on Direct Action Operations, often at the expense of more conventional training. This focus on the "high-speed" missions such as In-extremis Hostage Rescue (IHR) and opposed Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) fails to reinforce the original intent and inherent strengths of the MEU. Additionally, it goes against the current direction of the Commandant of the Marine Corps as evidenced by the removal of the IHR mission from the MEU(SOC) capabilities list.

## **Chapter 3**

# **MEU(SOC) Capabilities, Training and Organization**

## **Capabilities**

Today's MEU(SOC) provides the National Command Authorities and Geographic Combatant Commanders a certified, versatile MAGTF that provides sea-based, forward presence with inherent operational flexibility to respond rapidly to multiple missions. The forward-deployed MEU(SOC) is a uniquely organized, trained and equipped expeditionary force that is inherently sustainable, flexible, responsive and credible. The MEU(SOC) accomplishes this by providing four Core capabilities: Amphibious Operations, Direct Action Operations, Military Operations Other Than War, and Supporting Operations to include the introduction of follow-on forces.<sup>7</sup> The key to providing this forward presence/crisis response capability is the MEU(SOC)'s ability to rapidly plan, coordinate and execute these operations. A complete list of the specific capabilities of the MEU(SOC) as delineated in MCO 3120.9A is found in chart 1 below:

CATEGORIES	SPECIFIC CAPABILITIES
Amphibious Operations	Amphibious Assault Amphibious Raid Amphibious Demonstration Amphibious Withdrawal
Direct Action Operations	Seizure/Recovery of Offshore Energy Facilities Visit, Board, Search and Seizure Operations (VBSS) Specialized Demolition Ops Tactical Recovery of Aircraft And Personnel (TRAP) Seizure/Recovery of Selected Personnel or Material Counterproliferation (CP) of Weapons of Mass Destruction
Military Operations Other Than War	Peace Operations (Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement) Security Operations Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) Reinforcement Operations Joint/Combined Training / Instruction Teams Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief
Supporting Operations	Tactical Deception Operations Fire Support Planning, Coordination, and Control in a Joint/Combined Environment Signal Intelligence (SIGINT)/ Electronic Warfare (EW) Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) Reconnaissance and Surveillance (R&S) Initial Terminal Guidance Counterintelligence Ops (CI) Airfield / Port Seizure Limited Expeditionary Airfield Operations Show of Force Operations JTF Enabling Operations Sniping Operations

Chart 1

In order to possess the conventional and selected maritime special operations capabilities listed above, the MEU undergoes an extensive Predeployment Training Program that is Outlined in Marine Corps Order 3502.3. "The MEU takes part in the MEU(SOC) PTP to build upon and enhance its conventional maritime capabilities."<sup>8</sup> The PTP is standardized and incorporates a systematic approach to training. The PTP reinforces the development of the ARG/MEU team by providing standardization in five major areas: doctrine, organization, equipment and training and procedures. This paper will focus on the training program outlined by MCO 3502.3

### **MEU(SOC) PREDEPLOYMENT TRAINING PLAN**

The PTP is a standards-based process driven by the Mission Essential Task List (METL) as set forth in the Marine Corps Policy for MEU(SOC). This process allows the Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) and MEU Commanders to systematically analyze, develop and evaluate the integrated capabilities of the ARG/MEU. Framed within a 26-week period, it attempts to provide for an efficient use of time and resources while retaining the flexibility to be modified by the MEU Commander as required. The primary

objective of the PTP is the systematic attainment of the operational capabilities required for SOC designation.<sup>9</sup>

The work-up period is divided into three training phases: the Initial Training Phase, the Intermediate Training Phase and the Final Training Phase. Each phase has a distinct focus and allows for both formal and informal evaluations to check the progress of the training. The PTP also provides additional, overall evaluation focus for each of the MSE's over the entire training period.

The Initial Training Phase comprises approximately the first eight weeks of the work-up. This phase focuses on individual and small unit skills training for the MSE's and includes staff training for the MEU CE and MSE senior staffs. Special Operations Training Group (SOTG) courses for the MEU CE, MSE's and Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF) are also given during this phase. This phase begins with individual skills and advances to GCE and Squadron level tactical combat drills.

The PTP properly notes that due to time constraints and limited training resources, every effort must be made to efficiently use the training time available during this phase. The success of the MEU(SOC) is dependent not only the individual skills of its MSE's but also the ability of the MSE's to operate effectively with each other. For this

reason, the PTP strives to develop cohesiveness among the MSE's by having them train together as often as possible, even during this first stage of training. Highlights of this training phase include the ARG/MEU(SOC) Staff Planning Course, an initial training period at sea and SOTG-run courses such as Urban Sniper, Helicopter Rope Suspension Training (HRST), Company Raid Week, and the Battalion Raid Course.

The next eight weeks of training make up the Intermediate Training Phase. The MEU's goal during the Intermediate Training Phase is to conduct collective MEU training that exercises the individual and small unit skills developed in the initial phase. During this phase, SOTG instruction shifts from individual skill training to interoperability exercises designed to integrate the MSE's and increased emphasis on night and long-range operations.

Highlights of the Intermediate Training Phase include Maritime Special Purpose Force Interoperability Training, Training in an Urban Environment Exercise (TRUEX), Gas Oil Platform (GOPLAT) and VBSS Training. Each of these exercises provides the MSPF and the ACE with many opportunities to work together in a unique, "real-world" environment. This training phase culminates with the MEU Exercise (MEUEX). This exercise provides the MEU Commander

a final opportunity to evaluate the MEU's capabilities prior to commencement of the Final Training phase. SOTG may conduct informal evaluations of some MEU capabilities during both TRUEX and MEUEX.

During the Final Training Phase, the MEU undergoes the Special Operations Certification Exercise (SOCEX). This exercise is an evaluation coordinated by the MARFOR Commander or his executive agent (usually SOTG). The basis for certification of a MEU as SOC is the successful accomplishment of the required missions and demonstration of required capabilities. The SOCEX is conducted around four Core events: Amphibious Raid, Non-Combatant Evacuation, Tactical Recovery of Aircraft or Personnel, and a Direct Action Mission. The rigor of time constraints and multiple concurrent missions also facilitates the evaluation of the MEU's Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2).

Scheduling conflicts and weather considerations may vary the actual number of missions and capabilities that are evaluated during SOCEX. Some missions may be formally evaluated prior to SOCEX or simply omitted as required. Marine Corps Order 3502.3 does, however, require that the following missions and capabilities be evaluated prior to SOC designation:<sup>10</sup>

- (a) Amphibious Raid (Boat, Helicopter and Mechanized)
- (b) NEO (Single and Multi-Site)
- (c) Security Operations (Area and Physical Security to Embassy or Consulate-type Facility)
- (d) TRAP
- (e) Direct Action Mission (Destruction or Recovery Operations)
- (f) Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief
- (g) R2P2
- (h) Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)
  - (1) Reconnaissance and Surveillance
  - (2) Counter Intelligence
  - (3) Signal Intelligence
- (i) Long Range Raid (Requiring Forward Arming and Refueling Point operations)
- (j) Mass Casualty Drill
- (k) Airfield/Port Seizure Operations
- (l) Naval Platform Raid
- (m) Additional missions and capabilities as required by Commander Marine Forces or MEF Commander.

Upon completion of the SOCEX, a recommendation for certification is provided to the MARFOR Commander by the designated senior evaluator assigned. If the senior evaluator concludes the MEU is not mission capable, he will recommend to the MARFOR Commander that the MEU be reevaluated. This generally results in the reevaluation of one or more specific missions or capabilities until a satisfactory result is achieved. Once the MARFOR Commander approves the recommendation for SOC certification, he releases a message that serves as the primary SOC certifying document. Although the Predeployment Training Plan has now been discussed in some detail, an examination of both the organization of the MEU and the methodology for



implementation of this plan must be examined before one can assess whether or not the PTP effectively prepares the MEU for deployment.

### **MEU(SOC) Organization**

A MAGTF is comprised of four elements: a command element (CE); a ground combat element (GCE); an aviation combat element (ACE); and a combat service support group (CSSE). The MEU composition is very similar. In addition to the CE, it has a GCE composed of a reinforced rifle battalion, a reinforced helicopter squadron as the ACE, and a combat service support group designated the MEU Service Support Group (MSSG). The MEU is unique in that it also has a Maritime Special Purpose Force. While the MSPF is technically not an MSE of the MEU, it is addressed separately and specifically in the PTP.

The MSPF is task organized from MEU(SOC) assets to provide a special operations capable force that can be quickly tailored to accomplish a specific mission. It can be employed as a complement to the traditional MAGTF forces or in the execution of selected maritime special operations missions. Particular emphasis is placed on operations involving precision skills that are not traditionally resident in a rifle company. In order to master these unique skills, the MSPF undergoes an intensive series of

courses of instruction which run continuously from the beginning of the Initial Phase of Training through the Intermediate Phase.

The MSPF is not designed to duplicate the capabilities of existing Special Operations Forces (SOF), but its unique and rigorous training does require a significant amount of support, especially from the ACE. The MSPF is comprised of five elements:<sup>11</sup>

(a) Command Element. The commander of the MSPF (usually the OIC of the Force Reconnaissance detachment) will be designated by the MEU Commander.

(b) Covering Element. The covering element is normally a rifle platoon from one of the rifle companies in the Battalion Landing Team (BLT).

(c) Strike Element. The strike element is the focus of effort of the MSPF and is organized and trained to perform assault, explosive breaching, internal security and sniper functions. This element is normally comprised of members of the Force Reconnaissance detachment.

(d) Reconnaissance and Surveillance (R&S) Element. The R&S Element is normally composed of assets from the BLT Surveillance and Target Acquisition (STA) platoon (sniper support) coupled with elements of the Radio Battalion detachment, Communications detachment, and Counter Intelligence and Interrogator Translator Teams from the MEU CE.

(e) Aviation Support Element. The MEU ACE provides aviation support. This element is unique in that the ACE provides support to the entire MEU but only the MSPF has a doctrinally assigned aviation element. The ACE provides highly specialized aircraft packages that are tailored to the specific mission being performed by the MSPF. The highly specialized aviation skills (fastrope at night and onto moving platforms) and unique MSPF missions require a high degree of coordination and training between the ACE

and the MSPF. This high degree of interoperability requires the ACE to devote a large portion of their flight hours to SOTG programs that train the MSPF members in unique skills and exercises that promote ACE/MSPF coordination.

The MSPF is specifically trained and equipped to conduct direct action missions using Close Quarters Battle (CQB) skills taught by SOTG. The capabilities of the MSPF include:<sup>12</sup>

- (a) R&S
- (b) Specialized Demolitions
- (c) Seizure/recovery of offshore energy facilities
- (d) Seizure/recovery of selected personnel or material
- (e) VBSS
- (f) TRAP

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Special Operation Training Group and Aviation Combat Element**

#### **Special Operations Training Group**

The Special Operations Training Group is a task-organized training unit that falls under the G-7 section of the MEF. The mission of the SOTG is to provide training in amphibious operations, selected maritime special operations, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), and supporting operations, in all environments. In order to do this, SOTG directs a twenty-six week training program based on the Marine Corps Order for MEU(SOC) Predeployment Training. This schedule is developed with the MEU Commander and the MEF G-7 in order to allow the MAGTF Commanders the ability to ensure the training is tailored to their desires (within the confines of MCO 3502.3) and that sufficient time is available for non-SOTG sponsored training.

During the Initial and Intermediate Training Phases there are thirty-six scheduled training courses and events in a typical MEU schedule. The available "white space," or portions of the training schedule not used for SOTG involved courses and available for MEU or MSE training, is very small. Every MEU Commander would obviously like more

time available to allow his MSE's to conduct their own independent training as well as the training sponsored by SOTG. Time constraints as well as restrictions stipulated by the MEU(SOC) Predeployment Plan on required training conspire to limit the amount of individual unit training and non-SOTG involved interoperability training that the MSE's can conduct. The search for ways to increase this amount of training time will be discussed later in this paper.

### **Aviation Combat Element**

The MEU ACE is a reinforced helicopter squadron that includes AV-8B attack aircraft and two CONUS based KC-130 aircraft. The ACE is task organized to provide assault support, fixed wing and rotary wing close air support, airborne command and control and low-level, close-in air defense for the ARG. According to MCO 3120.9A, the ACE is structured as follows:

(a) Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM). The HMM is the core squadron of the ACE and is configured with twelve CH-46E helicopters that provide medium-lift assault support.

(b) Marine Heavy Helicopter (HMH) Detachment. The HMH detachment is normally configured with four CH53E helicopters that provide extended-range, heavy-lift support.

(c) Marine Light Attack Squadron (HMLA) Detachment. The HMLA detachment is normally configured with four AH-1W attack helicopters and two or three UH-1N utility

helicopters that provide close air support, airborne command and control and escort capability.

(d) Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) Detachment. The VMA detachment usually has six AV-8B aircraft that provide organic close air support and limited offensive air support.

(e) Marine Aerial Refueler/Transport Squadron (VMGR) Detachment. The VMGR detachment is configured with two KC-130 aircraft that provide refueling services for embarked aircraft and other support tasks such as parachute operations, flare drops and cargo and personnel transportation as required. The airborne command and control capabilities of the KC-130 also provide the MEU Commander a tremendous asset in long range missions. The detachment trains with the MEU throughout the PTP, and then is placed on CONUS standby and prepared to deploy within 96 hours.

(f) Marine Air Control Group (MACG) Detachment with the following elements:

(1) Marine Air Support Squadron (MASS) Detachment. This detachment provides limited Direct Air Support Center capability.

(2) Low Altitude Air Defense Detachment. This detachment provides low-level, close-in air defense.

(g) Marine Wing Support Squadron MWSS Detachment. This detachment provides aviation bulk fuel support and limited food service support.

(h) Marine Aviation and Logistics Squadron (MALS) Detachment. The MALS detachment provides maintenance and aviation supply support.

The commanders of each of the MSE's within the MEU face many challenges in training their respective units. Each must rapidly assimilate a number of detachments into a cohesive unit that, in turn, must integrate itself within the MEU structure. Every parent unit strives to send out detachments that are already highly skilled in their

individual Military Occupational Specialties. In reality, however, limited time, manpower and resources often dictate that the Marines and sailors in the detachments may be inexperienced and in need of further individual training. Nowhere are these circumstances more evident than in the ACE.

The Ace Commander must assimilate six different types of aircraft, their pilots and maintainers into a single squadron that must be prepared to start operating together within the first week they are transferred. A variety of training methods are available to the ACE. During the initial training phase, classroom instruction is an invaluable tool. It is imperative that each member of the ACE understands the capabilities and requirements of the other aircraft types and elements of the ACE. The pilots and Marines in the ACE must then study the missions and capabilities of the MEU and the role the ACE plays in their accomplishment. While classes play an important part, the ACE must, as one would expect, get planes in the air to train.

The amount of aviation training a squadron can conduct in a given month is ultimately governed by the number of flight hours they have programmed to fly. This number of flight hours is, in turn, governed by several factors. The

first factor that determines the amount of flight hours a squadron can fly is budgetary. The Tactical Aircraft (TACAIR) Flying Hour Program (FHP) provides guidance for "the apportionment and management of funds allocated from the Operation and Maintenance, Navy (O&M,N) appropriation to Marine Corps commands for the operation of aircraft."<sup>13</sup> The Marine Aircraft Wing manages the number of flight hours each squadron is allotted. Hours are appropriated based on a squadron's requests, current Training and Readiness (T&R) requirements, and the total budget for flight hours allotted to the Wing by the MARFOR Commander.

"The primary purpose of the TACAIR FHP is to ensure the combat readiness of the ACE, which in turn is dependent on the readiness of the individuals within its tactical units."<sup>14</sup> In keeping with this concept, there is rarely any restriction placed on the number of flight hours the ACE can request. This does not, however, equate to an unlimited quantity of flight hours. In the absence of budgetary or administrative restrictions, maintenance and personnel become the limiting factors.

Each helicopter in the ACE undergoes a scheduled maintenance period called a phase inspection after a set number of flight hours. This number of hours is set by NAVAIR and varies by aircraft. It may be as few as 100



hours in the case of the CH-46E or as many as 150 in the case of the CH-53E.<sup>15</sup> Once this number of hours is flown on an airframe, that airframe can no longer be flown until scheduled maintenance and inspections take place. These inspections generally take between one and six days to complete and a squadron can do as many as four at once while sustaining normal operations (although not more than two or three at any one time is preferred). Proper management of the timing between phase inspections of the helicopters is essential to ensuring the mission readiness of the ACE. Flying too many hours or improper management of aircraft during a high operational tempo month can result in a large percentage of aircraft requiring maintenance at once, thus decreasing the availability to the MEU.

While programmed maintenance is a major limiting factor in the number of flight hours that can be flown, several other factors must also be considered before arriving at a number of flight hours that can be flown. Not all of the ACE's assigned aircraft may be mission capable on a given day. In some extreme conditions, the ACE may not even have all of its aircraft on hand due to corrosion inspections or airframe modifications that must be performed at the depot level. Every effort is made to

schedule and complete these inspections such that the ACE has all its aircraft for the entire predeployment training period but this does not always work out. Unscheduled maintenance and aircraft that are not mission capable (due to a broken part that is not available) further limit the available aircraft for the squadron to fly.

In some instances, pilot availability is the limiting factor. Mission planning requirements coupled with "crew day" restrictions, non-flying duties and even illness can limit the number of available pilots. While this is not extremely critical for the CH-46E community that has twenty-seven pilots for twelve aircraft, it is critical for the detachments such as the AH-1W detachment that only has nine pilots assigned to fly its four aircraft. (All helicopters require two pilots in order to be mission capable).

Once all factors have been considered, the amount of flight hours that can be flown in a given month is determined. At this point, the squadron's Pilot Training Officer (PTO) develops a training plan for the Squadron Commanding Officer, apportioning the month's hours. There are many requirements that these hours must fulfil. The squadron must fly Functional Check Flights on the aircraft after maintenance is performed and before the helicopter is

available for general use. The aircraft must also be flown to conduct Instrument and NATOPS check flights (annual proficiency evaluations all pilots must undergo). A portion of the hours must be devoted to the MEU for GCE and other MEU sponsored training, and SOTG also requires aviation support for some of their courses of instruction and exercises. The ACE can then use the remaining hours for dedicated squadron training. During the Initial Phase of the work-up, flight training focuses on individual pilot skills, familiarization flights with dissimilar aircraft types flying together in formation and basic battle drill in these mixed flights.<sup>16</sup>

Individual pilot training in Marine Corps Aviation is governed by the Marine Corps Orders on Training and Readiness (T&R). The T&R prescribes a series of training flights using a building block approach. This syllabus starts with simple familiarization flights and progress through high threat profile, tactical flights. A pilot's progress is tracked by Combat Readiness Percentage (CRP). Each training flight is assigned a numerical percentage. With each flight a pilot successfully completes, his or her CRP increases.

Each pilot must also remain proficient in these syllabus skills. The T&R syllabus lists "refly factors in

numbers of months from the date flown/completed which pass to the month in which the event must be reflown/redone to assure skill retention in the tasks involved."<sup>17</sup> If this refly is exceeded, the numerical value of that event is subtracted from the pilot's CRP. This procedure gives the PTO and the squadron commanding officer a way of quantifying a pilot's skill and proficiency level.

By completing T&R syllabus events, pilots also earn qualifications such as Terrain Flight and Night Vision Goggle (NVG) Qualification. Terrain Flight Qualification involves flying below 200 feet above ground level (AGL) while NVG qualification involves proficiency training using the night vision goggles to perform a variety of skills. A pilot may not carry troops using NVGs until he or she completes the required syllabus to become NVG qualified. In addition to being Night Systems qualified, all aircrewmen must have flown at least one T&R NVG sortie within the last 30 days in order to carry troops while wearing Night Vision Goggles.<sup>18</sup> The number of flight hours required to train and ensure proficiency for each pilot on NVGs may force a limit on the number of NVG qualified pilots a squadron can maintain if external support requirements are excessive.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis/Conclusions**

#### **The Training Schedule**

Twenty-six weeks provides very little time to train a force that possesses all of the capabilities set forth in the Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). In fact, a general focus on just the four categories of MEU(SOC) capabilities could consume this entire training period. The focused training that currently takes place to cover the twenty-nine specific capabilities described in MCO 3120.9A overextends the MEU and its MSE's during certain portions of the training schedule. As a result of the limited time available and the large quantity of material to be taught, SOTG must prioritize the scheduled training in accordance with the applicable Marine Corps Orders and the desires of the MEF and MEU Commanders.

While the units that make up the MEU inherently possess most of the conventional skills required to conduct Amphibious Operations, MOOTW, and Supporting Operations, many of the skills that are required to conduct the final category of capability, Direct Action Operations, must be taught "from scratch" by SOTG. This necessitates a heavy

focus on initial skills training for a small percentage of the MEU (the MSPF with all of its elements accounts for approximately 85 Marines and sailors or 5% of the MEU). This training often comes at the expense of reinforcing resident conventional skills and conducting invaluable interoperability training with the ARG. This is especially true for units that play a large supporting role (e.g., the ACE) in SOTG sponsored training.

There are two basic options to alleviate the training shortfalls that occur due to the time constraints. The first option is simply to extend the MEU PTP schedule beyond twenty-six weeks. The obvious advantage of this option is that all of the current training could still be conducted and, with added time, training events would not overlap and more time would be available for MSE and MEU training. This option is a recurring issue at the MEU(SOC) Review and was again addressed in the most recent review (Fiscal Year 2000).<sup>19</sup> While it is widely accepted that moving the Change of Operational Control (CHOP) date to Embarkation (E)-240 would greatly enhance the flexibility of the PTP, current manning and the three-MEU-per-coast structure makes this option untenable. One viable alternative to starting the PTP for the entire MEU early is to begin certain individual skills courses prior to the

start of the twenty-six week work-up schedule. This option is already being exercised for certain MSPF skills at both I MEF and II MEF.

The other option to reduce the training shortfalls that occur during the execution of the PTP is remove or restructure some of the currently scheduled training classes and evolutions. Before rewriting the MEU(SOC) PTP to free up assets and manpower for MSE and MEU training, the core capabilities the MEU(SOC) must possess and the associated Mission Essential Task List (METL) must be reviewed. Removal of an entire block of training or even a significant portion could result in the inability of the MEU to perform a required task and ultimately be deficient in a stated core capability. The METL must drive the PTP. Thus an adjustment of the PTP requires a critical review of the Policy for MEU(SOC). The vehicle for this review is the MEU(SOC) Review directed by the Commandant.

### **MEU(SOC) Review**

In July of 1999, the Commandant published his guidance for the future of the Marine Corps. This guidance stated that the "Marine Air-Ground Task Force is both our legacy and the foundation for our future success."<sup>20</sup> The Commandant further stated that, as we evolve to meet the challenges of the 21st century, we must explore new possibilities for the

MAGTF's adaptation to future realities. Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS) suggests a need to examine our current warfighting structure. Based on the Commandant's guidance, Headquarters Marine Corps, Plans, Policies and Operations (PP&O) directed a review of the MEU(SOC) capabilities and solicited input from the operating forces and Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) for any recommended changes.

The review was conducted in three phases. The first phase consisted of an examination of the twenty-nine MEU(SOC) capabilities set forth in MCO 3120.9A. The second phase concentrated on implications for doctrine, structure, training and equipment. The final phase, which is currently ongoing, is focusing on changing/rewriting current doctrine, orders and directives as required.

A historical review of MEU(SOC) participation in contingency operations since the program's inception provides a good starting point for an examination of the continued relevance of MEU(SOC) capabilities. The following chart provides an overview of MEU(SOC) operations from December 1983 to March 1999.<sup>21</sup>



<b>Task Assigned</b>	<b>Number of Operations</b>
Amphibious Withdrawals	2
Supporting Operations	7
Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief	5
Peace Operations	7
Show of Force	10
NEO	9
Security Operations	3
Reinforcement Operations	1
TRAP	1
VBSS	1

*Chart 2*

An examination of the operations conducted by the MEU(SOC)s shows an overwhelming majority called for the MEU to conduct conventional operations with the majority of these being carried out by the BLT. Only two direct action missions were conducted during this period. The first was a TRAP mission conducted on 8 June 1995 by the 24<sup>th</sup> MEU(SOC) while participating in Operation DENY FLIGHT. The MEU successfully rescued USAF Captain Scott O'Grady after his F-16 was shot down by a SA-6. The only other direct action mission was conducted by elements of the 31<sup>st</sup> MEU embarked aboard the *USS Dubuque* and *USS Germantown*. Embarked Marines (to include the MSPF) and SEALs conducted unopposed boarding and subsequent searches/inspections of various ships in the Gulf.

Obviously the ability to perform a task or capability can not be discarded simply because it has not been used in

recent history. It is possible that the simple presence of a MEU(SOC) unit with its advertised capabilities may deter an aggressor and thus prevent the necessity of ever actually having to employ these skills. Conversely, we must continue to analyze the capabilities that we train for, and be prepared to delete those capabilities that are no longer relevant to the combatant commanders. Many factors must be considered when reviewing capabilities. The probability of a requirement for the actual use of the capability in practice, redundancy (is the skill or capability available to the CinC from another unit), and a cost benefit analysis of training for and maintaining a capability are among the most prominent factors when conducting a review.

Using the aforementioned criteria, MARFORLANT, MARFORPAC, MARFORRES and MCCDC reviewed the MEU(SOC) program and provided recommendations to PP&O. The PP&O information paper summarized the following key points from these inputs: "MEU(SOC) program is not broken. Recommendations to repackage with more emphasis on conventional capabilities. Noteworthy was the recommendation to drop in-extremis hostage recovery (IHR) capability."<sup>22</sup> The PP&O Operational Planning Team (OPT) consolidated the operating forces and MCCDC inputs and

developed the following new mission statement for the MEU(SOC):

Provide a forward deployed, flexible, sea based, Marine Air Ground Task Force, capable of rapidly executing Amphibious Operations, designated Maritime Special Operations, Military Operations Other Than War, and Supporting Operations to include enabling the introduction of follow on forces.<sup>23</sup>

The OPT retained the characteristics of the MEU(SOC) as written in the current order. A summary of the changes to the Core Capabilities and Mission Essential Tasks is provided in the chart below.<sup>24</sup>

CORE CAPABILITIES	MISSION ESSENTIAL TASKS
Amphibious Operations	Amphibious Assault Amphibious Raid Amphibious Demonstration Amphibious Withdrawal
Maritime Special Operations	Direct Action Operations Seizure/Recovery of Offshore Energy Facilities Visit, Board, Search and Seizure Operations (VBSS) Specialized Demolition Ops Tactical Recovery of Aircraft And Personnel (TRAP) Enhanced Urban Operations
Military Operations Other Than War	Peace Operations (Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement) Security Operations Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief
Supporting Operations	Tactical Deception Operations Fire Support Planning, Coordination, and Control in a Joint/Combined Environment Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance

Supporting Operations	Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) Reconnaissance and Surveillance (R&S) Counterintelligence Ops (CI) SCAMP (sensor operations) Airfield / Port Seizure Limited Expeditionary Airfield Operations Enabling Operations Provide Command, Control, Communications, and Computers (C4) Employ Non-Lethal Weapons Information Operations Anti-Terrorism Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2)
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*Chart 3*

This review of the MEU(SOC) program was highly effective and made considerable progress in refining the mission and capabilities of the MEU(SOC). The improbability of a scenario requiring the MEU to execute an IHR was cited by all commands that reviewed the program. Even more significant, however, was another issue that continues to plague the MEU(SOC) program even now that it has been refined. This problem is the overinvestment of training in one capability to the detriment of another capability. In this case, the problem was a noted decrease in the capability of Force Reconnaissance to conduct deep reconnaissance as a result of the inordinate amount of time required to train to the precision shooting skill required

by the IHR capability. The MEU(SOC) Review was extremely effective in identifying this deficiency and making a change that will result in the strengthening of a conventional skill that is applicable across the full spectrum of MEU(SOC) capability while losing very little in terms of "usefulness" to the CinC.

Using this rationale, the VBSS capability of the MEU(SOC) should also be reviewed and seriously considered for deletion. There are several reasons why the removal of this capability will strengthen the overall capability of the MEU(SOC). Like IHR, there is little historical precedent for retaining this capability at the MEU(SOC) level. An original tenet of the MEU(SOC) program was that it would not duplicate the capabilities of existing SOF capabilities. In the case of VBSS, it not only duplicates an existing SOF capability, it duplicates the Naval Special Warfare (SEAL detachment) VBSS capability that is *resident* in the MEU(SOC)/ARG team on every deployment. Finally, the removal of this capability would free up invaluable ACE and MSPF training time and assets.

The II MEF SOTG training package for VBSS is conducted with the James River fleet in Northeastern Virginia. While this gives the MEU a chance to practice VBSS on unique ship types, it also requires the ACE to deploy aircraft to Ft.

Eustis to support this evolution. The required package is four CH-46E, one CH-53E, two UH-1N, 1 AH-1W and two AV-8B aircraft.<sup>25</sup> Although the Cobras and Harriers are only required for two days, this package requires the ACE to deploy approximately one third of its aircraft and a maintenance detachment for a week. During this week, the aircraft are not permitted to do any training other than those flights specified in the SOTG syllabus. This training module does provide training for the ACE but when the value of this training is compared to the manpower and asset usage required, the results are not favorable.

Deploying this detachment not only limits the training of the aircraft and pilots deployed but also the remainder of the squadron. Deploying a detachment severely limits the ability of the squadron to run day and night crew maintenance. This means the squadron is essentially limited to an eight to ten hour flight window. If the squadron is tasked by the MEU (or in some cases another SOTG event) during the day, the squadron can not conduct NVG training at night. Eliminating training that provides only marginal return for all of the units involved has other advantages as well. In this case, if the VBSS training is eliminated, other courses can be extended and also moved "left or right" in the training schedule to

prevent overlapping support requirements and thus allow for better quality training and more effective asset management.

An examination of the 22nd MEU work-up shows the month of July as a prime example of too many events scheduled in a given time period. During this period, the training schedule worked out such that the MSPF Interoperability Training and Helicopter Raid week overlapped. This essentially resulted in the ACE being on-call for a day and a night raid package on three separate days. While this is physically supportable, it severely limits the planning resources available (crew day restrictions prevent the same crew from flying both missions) and negates nearly any learning value. The recommendations of LtCol Boynton, Commanding Officer of HMM-162, summarize the best solution to this problem, "...do one raid per day and do it well. This will free adequate planners and aircrew, as well as aircraft to ensure the raid has adequate support to achieve the learning objectives."<sup>26</sup> Scheduling conflicts such as the one described above are not at all infrequent during the PTP. During the very next week (1-3 August), SOTG escort requirements for the Mechanized Raid Week instruction conflicted with VBSS. There simply were not enough Cobras and pilots to go around.

Overinvestment of assets over a short period of time also has more far reaching implications for the ACE. The monthly "budget" for CH-46E hours is approximately 250. HMM-162 estimated a usage rate of 105 hours for PHIBRON/MEU Integration (PMINT), 240 for Raid Week, 25 more for MSPF Interoperability and approximately 50 hours for Functional Check Flights (15% of total monthly flight time) for a total of 420 hours. This equates to approximately 4.2 aircraft phase inspections.<sup>27</sup> From a pure flying hours standpoint, this month is supportable, provided the ACE flies little or nothing else. However, repeated use of identical aircraft packages restricts the squadron's ability to manage flight time on individual aircraft. This in turn results in a requirement to conduct phase maintenance on multiple aircraft at once. This perpetuates the "vicious cycle", more phases mean more mechanics required to conduct scheduled maintenance and less to conduct maintenance to keep aircraft available for the daily flight schedule. This obviously overloads the few remaining aircraft, thus increasing their phase cycle. At best, the squadron meets its scheduled requirements for July, but is woefully "behind the power curve" for upcoming evolutions in August and September.



At the operational level of war, synergy is achieved by effectively synchronizing and integrating operations. This same principle must be applied to the MEU(SOC) PTP. Maintenance periods must be inserted into the training plan to transition effectively into integrated periods of instruction that maximize training benefit to all MSCs rather than just using one to train another. Raid courses, for example, should be integrated to train the greatest number of Marines in one fluid evolution rather than overlapping separate courses. This point is especially important when both of the overlapping courses have intensive aviation support requirements such as the Helicopter Raid Course and the MSPF Interoperability Course. "The time, effort, force structure, and capability tradeoff required to maintain the direct action capability in its current form limits preparedness in more frequently required areas."<sup>28</sup> If the PTP can not be adjusted in its current form to reflect an increased emphasis on conventional skills without a corresponding increase in operational tempo, then the MEU(SOC) Review must further limit MEU(SOC) required tasks to those *most relevant* to the CinC so that the MEU can effectively train to them.

## **Restructuring the MEU(SOC) Predeployment Training Plan**

"Our willingness to embrace change is one of the Corps' greatest strengths."<sup>29</sup> According to the Commandant, "We will study our MAGTF training programs to determine whether we are preparing for the right number and type of missions."<sup>30</sup> Phase I and Phase II of the MEU(SOC) Review have embraced this guidance and revised the Core Capabilities and Mission Essential Tasks of the MEU(SOC). The challenge now is to restructure the training program to fully exploit the positive changes drafted in Phase I and II. These changes, along with the guidance provided by the operating forces and the Commandant, should guide the restructure of the MEU(SOC) PTP.

If we return to the key recommendations of the operating forces and MCCDC we find a useful starting point for reform. The MEU(SOC) program is not broken. The MEU(SOC) program continues to enjoy tremendous success. Radical changes to the PTP are neither warranted nor healthy. The recommendation to repackage predeployment training with a more conventional emphasis provides the first piece of useful guidance for change. This concept directly supports the Commandant's guidance that "we should

think beyond routine forward deployment operations to other larger requirements.”<sup>31</sup>

Currently, SOTG prepares the specific training schedule for a MEU based on the Marine Corps Order for MEU(SOC) Predeployment Training. Although SOTG has been accused in the past of writing this plan “in a vacuum”, to say this is not only unfair but also untrue. SOTG meets with the appropriate MARFOR Commander and MEU Commander to determine their specific desires and intent for training before writing this schedule. With this guidance, SOTG then develops a specific training plan based on deploy date, available ARG shipping, holidays and availability of external training resources. SOTG does an admirable job in this respect. However, the current training plan still focuses heavily on the Maritime Special Operations capability of the MEU. While the tasks required to support Maritime Special Operations training do provide some training across the full spectrum of capabilities, at some point this narrow focus is to the detriment of the MEU’s overall training requirements.

The MEU(SOC) PTP must accurately and proportionately reflect the full spectrum of MEU capabilities. Military Operations Other Than War, Supporting Operations and Amphibious Operations must be given dedicated instruction

and exercise time in the PTP. There are 36 named training events that are scheduled during the Initial and Intermediate Training Phase; 13 are dedicated to the MSPF and another six are dedicated to the small boat company from the BLT.<sup>32</sup> Yet, in the 46 contingency operations conducted by MEU(SOC)s since 1985 (chart 2), the MSPF has only been used once and small boats have never been employed. Peace Operations, HA/DR and NEO account for nearly 60% of the contingency operations conducted by MEU(SOC)s but of these three tasks only HA and NEO are addressed in the PTP and then only for four days and in conjunction with Mass Casualty training.<sup>33</sup>

While we can not discount the need to train for a capability simply because it hasn't been required in recent history, at some point, given limited training time and assets, we must begin to focus our training on our most likely and relevant capabilities and tasks. The idea that HA, Peace Operations and NEOs don't need to be emphasized in the PTP since they only require skills that are already resident in the MSEs is just plain wrong. While some of these skills are, in fact, resident in the MSEs, if the training for these tasks is not "protected" by a dedicated block in the PTP the MSEs will fail to adequately prepare for these tasks. The PTP must identify those skills that

make the MEU successful in its most likely missions and refocus training in these areas.

In order to more effectively manage this "restructured" training schedule, the unit that organizes the training should also undergo reorganization. SOTG should be reorganized as the Special Operations Capable Training Group (SOC)TG. This change would largely reflect the change in the focus of the training program. Since most of the required conventional skills are resident in the MSEs, this change would not require a large change in force structure from the current SOTG T/O. The only structural difference would be the addition of a MEU(SOC) training branch. This branch would be staffed with 4-8 Marines organized in a schedules section and a liaison section for the MEU, GCE, ACE, and MSSG. The purpose of the liaison sections would be to coordinate the specific skills requirements of the MSE's for the next MEU.

Additionally, each training block of instruction must include training that is tailored to the needs of each of the participating MSE's. The attitude that "this training is for the MEU (or GCE, or ACE, etc.), follow the script and try and get something out it" is neither efficient nor acceptable. With a little extra effort, training can be

"customized" to optimize the results for all the participating units.

The MEU(SOC) Training Branch would initially serve two basic functions that are crucial to the reorganization of the PTP. First, the liaison sections would interface with MEU staff and MSE representatives to determine the capabilities, tasks and implied skills they would most like to see focused. This is the method by which (SOC)TG would customize the training modules. Second, the schedules section would draft the specific training plan for a MEU based on the input from the liaison sections and the inputs of the MEU and MEF Commanders. The schedules section would be responsible for maintaining a training balance commensurate with the capabilities advertised in the Policy for MEU(SOC), essentially broadening the conventional skills training, while ensuring that adequate training time and assets are allotted for special skills training.

The MEU(SOC) continues to be one of the premier forward deployed tools the CinC has at his disposal for the myriad of conflicts that may arise in his region. However, the way we prepare for these deployments is misdirected. Although the recent MEU(SOC) Review has made considerable progress toward reorienting the PTP toward conventional skills and capabilities, an inordinate amount of time is

still spent on training for selected maritime special operations. While this may be "good training", continued neglect of conventional fundamentals will ultimately result in a forward deployed force that is least prepared to conduct the missions it is most likely to execute. The United States Marine Corps "owes it to the sailors and Marines who will be the first in the door in an emergency to give them the best possible preparation for the challenges they will actually face."<sup>34</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.8A, *Policy for the Organization of Fleet Marine Forces for Combat*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 26 June 1992.

<sup>2</sup> General Paul X. Kelley, "The Marine Corps and Special Operations," *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1985, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Kelley, 23

<sup>4</sup> Kelley, 23.

<sup>5</sup> "15<sup>th</sup> MEU History," URL: <<http://cpp.usmc.mil/web/mef.nsf/>> accessed 3 December 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Major Harry M. Murdock, "MAU(SOC): A Powerful Maritime Force," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 1987, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.9A, *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 24 November 1997, 9. Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.9A, *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 24 November 1997, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3502.3, *Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) Predeployment Training Program*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 7 July 1995, 2.

<sup>9</sup> MCO 3502.3, 3.

<sup>10</sup> MCO 3502.3, 6.

<sup>11</sup> MCO 3120.9A, 7,8.

<sup>12</sup> MCO 3120.9A, 8

<sup>13</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3125.1, *Marine Corps Flying Hour Program Management*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 28 April, 1988, 2.

<sup>14</sup> MCO 3125.1, 3.

<sup>15</sup> NAVAIR Publication A1-H46AE-MRC-400 states the requirement to "provide a balanced inspection which constitutes a 400 hour phased maintenance cycle. The maintenance requirements of each phase interval inspection shall be accomplished at the expiration of 100 flight hours following the completion of the prior phase interval." AH-H53CE-MRC-400 dictates a 150-hour phase interval for the Ch-53E.

<sup>16</sup> MCO 3502.3, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) P3500.14F, *Aviation Training and Readiness Manual, Volume I, Administrative*, Washington D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 24 February 1999, 9-5.

<sup>18</sup> A complete discussion on NVG and TERF training requirements can be found in Chapter 5 of T&R Volume I.

<sup>19</sup> The E-180 Chop date was covered on day 2 (29 February 2000) of this year's conference. The following questions framed the "deliverables" for this conference: Is there enough time to conduct all the training/preparation for the MEU(SOC)s? Is an increase in the Chop Date feasible given the staffing challenges? What are the adjustments to the training program given new capabilities and tasks?

<sup>20</sup> ALMAR 023/99, *Commandant's Guidance*, Washington D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 2 July 1999, 10.

<sup>21</sup> This chart is a reproduction of data compiled by Headquarters Marine Corps PP& (POE-70) as background information for the FY00 MEU(SOC) Review.



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- <sup>22</sup> Information Paper, MEU(SOC) Review Issues of Contention, Washington D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps PP&O (POE-70).
- <sup>23</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.9B (DRAFT), *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 9 October 2000.
- <sup>24</sup> Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.9B (DRAFT), *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 9 October 2000.
- <sup>25</sup> SOTG Letter of Instruction for VBSS, II MEF SOTG, Camp Lejeune, 1 June 2000.
- <sup>26</sup> LtCol Frank R. Boynton, Commanding Officer, HMM-162(Rein), Interview by the author 25 November 2000.
- <sup>27</sup> Boynton, Interview.
- <sup>28</sup> Major Darrin Denny and Captain Daniel Q. Greenwood, "The MEU(SOC) Program in Transition" *Marine Corps Gazette*, June 2000, 60.
- <sup>29</sup> ALMAR 023/99, 10.
- <sup>30</sup> ALMAR 023/99, 10.
- <sup>31</sup> ALMAR 023/99, 11.
- <sup>32</sup> This information is compiled from the combined SOTG, 24MEU/CPR6 Power Point presentation dtd 12/31/00 to the CG II MEF regarding the PTP for 24MEU.
- <sup>33</sup> SOTG presentation dtd 12/31/00.
- <sup>34</sup> Major William F. Mullen, "The MEU(SOC) Program: Are We Preparing Properly?" *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1997, 28.

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